

Redesign to highlight history

Robert Bevan

Layers of history are being unearthed in Hobart as archaeologists dig around what is arguably Australia's most important assemblage of colonial era buildings.

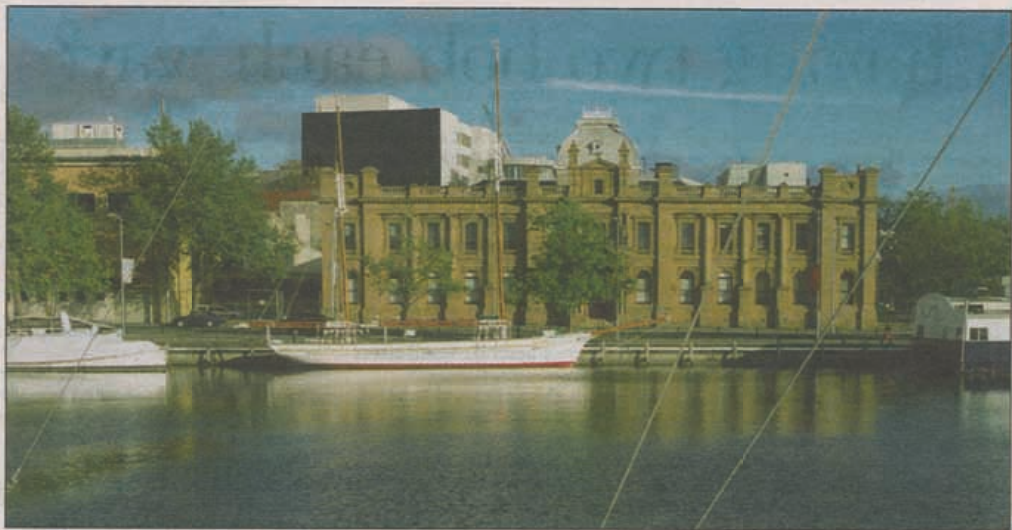
An early finger wharf connecting with the city's historic dockside Watergate is just one of the finds helping to shape the development of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

Last month, state Premier Paul Lennon announced the winning team to draw up the master plan for a \$30 million redevelopment of the museum precinct. A further \$100 million of new works could follow.

Sydney architecture practice Johnson Pilton Walker, the firm behind the refurbishment of the Sydney Opera House and the new National Portrait Gallery in Canberra, has joined forces with young Hobart practice Terroir to define the scope of the redevelopment.

"These buildings and the objects in them tell the stories of thousands of years of Tasmanian history," Mr Lennon said, announcing the appointment. "Tales of Aboriginal warriors, stories of convicts making anew, and accounts of animals and plants that have lived on the island."

The museum, which was set up in the early 1800s by the Royal Society of Tasmania, is unique in Australia in combining artefacts, artworks and natural history. Its collection



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comprises more than 800,000 objects and has expanded into a series of sandstone buildings that make up an entire city block. These include one of Australia's oldest structures, the commissariat store and the private secretary's cottage for the original government house.

The redevelopment of the museum complex, which is set across 20 levels, seeks to offer a more coherent experience for visitors to TMAG, allowing exhibitions that draw on its diverse holdings. It

forms part of the wider reshaping of Hobart's waterfront. The \$30 million first-phase expansion will include a new 1000 square metre space for temporary exhibitions, a new entrance foyer, lecture theatre, restaurant and loading bay.

The Terroir/JPW team beat some of Australia's foremost practices to the job, including Denton Corker Marshall, Architectus, FJMT and Allen Jack + Cottier. A further competitive tender process will decide which architects will design the new

buildings. The end result is likely to be a weaving together of forms rather than a grandstanding architectural edifice.

Græme Dix of JPW said the Tasmanian Museum was one of the few places with such a rich base of material from every level of society — sketch books by school children to government documents.

"There is a great collection of buildings over a long time line that could tell a rich story about Hobart, but don't at the moment," he said.